

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are all the claims pending in the application. Claim 1 is the only independent claim. The foregoing amendment to claim 1 is supported at least by Figs. 2A and 2B, as originally presented.

At the very top of page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner requests that the references to the claims in the specification be deleted, and that the Abstract be amended to be a single paragraph. Those changes are effected by this Amendment. In addition, the rejection of claim 11 for lack of antecedent basis is believed to be overcome by the foregoing amendment to that claim.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, Applicant respectfully traverses the prior art rejections based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

None of the cited references disclose or fairly suggest the narrow grooves (30) provided at one side in the tire circumferential direction of each of the chamfer portions (24) as disclosed Figs. 1 and 2A.

Chamfer portions having a depth gradually increasing toward the circumferential main groove and facing the circumferential main groove in the vicinities of the tire circumferential direction one side corner portions of the central land portion row are provided, whereby surfaces of both sides in a tire width direction of the central land portion row are made uneven in the tire circumferential direction. According to this arrangement, wet draining performance can be improved as described in the specification on page 3, third and fourth full paragraphs.

A projecting part 18 of JP '109 is not formed within the land portion 16, but rather outside of the land portion 16. By contrast, the chamfer portion (24) of the present invention is

formed within the central land portion row (18). Accordingly, even if the narrow grooves 20 disclosed in EP '457 are provided at the land portion 16 of JP '109, the projecting part 18 of JP '109 would not be provided with the narrow grooves at its side.

Additionally, the projecting part 18 of JP '109 is provided in order to reduce resonance sound by irregularly reflecting compressed air generated within a longitudinal groove 12. Consequently, absent the proscribed use of hindsight, there would have been no motivation or suggestion to combine the projecting part 18 of JP '109 and the narrow groove 20 disclosed in EP '457 to arrive at the chamfer portions (24) provided with the narrow grooves (30) at the side as in the present invention.

In WO '881, notches 29 and 30 are provided to improve the tire grip of snowy ground, but WO '881 is silent about water drainage performed by the notches 29 or 30. Once again, absent the proscribed use of hindsight, there would have been no motivation or suggestion in WO '881 to combine the notches 29 or 30 and the narrow groove 20 disclosed in EP '457 to achieve the chamfer portions (24) provided with the narrow groove (30) at the side, as in the present invention.

None of the other references relied on by the Examiner supply the deficiencies of JP '109, WO '881 and EP '457 as discussed above.

By providing the narrow grooves (30) at one side of the chamfer portions (24), the blocks or the false blocks of the present invention are each divided into plural portions, and the rigidity of the blocks or the false blocks can be controlled and made uniform as described in the specification on page 15, third paragraph.

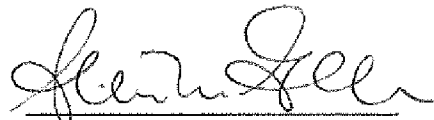
Further, when driving, the land portion rigidity is increased and a collapse of the blocks or the false locks can be avoided as described in the specification on page 15, fifth paragraph.

More specifically, when driving, the walls of the narrow grooves (30) face and make contact with each other so that the blocks or the false blocks support each other and the land portion rigidity is enhanced, thereby avoiding collapse of the blocks or the false blocks. Accordingly, excellent wet performance is achieved together with land portion rigidity and steering stability.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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